Fairy godfathers and magical elections: understanding the 2003 electoral crisis in Anambra State, Nigeria

Hoffmann, Leena

DOI:
10.1017/S0022278X1000025X

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Hoffmann, L 2010, 'Fairy godfathers and magical elections: understanding the 2003 electoral crisis in Anambra State, Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 48, no. 02, pp. 285-310.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X1000025X

Fairy godfathers and magical elections: understanding the 2003 electoral crisis in Anambra State, Nigeria

Leena Hoffmann

The Journal of Modern African Studies / Volume 48 / Issue 02 / June 2010, pp 285 - 310
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X1000025X, Published online: 19 May 2010

J. of Modern African Studies, 48, 2 (2010), pp. 285–310.
doi:10.1017/S0022278X1000025X

*Fairy godfathers and magical elections: understanding the 2003 electoral crisis in Anambra State, Nigeria**

LEENA HOFFMANN

Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK

Emails: LKA479@bham.ac.uk, leenahoffmann@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

On 10 July 2003, a civilian coup was attempted in Anambra state in South-east Nigeria. Barely two months after Chris Ngige was sworn in as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governor of Anambra, a team of armed policemen disarmed his security detail and took him into custody. The governor's attempted ousting made public the breakdown of his relationship with his political godfather, Chief Chris Uba, and sparked a debate on godfather politics in Nigeria. Using the case of Anambra, this article investigates the complex network of personalised relationships that holders of state power maintain with their national and local clientelistic constituencies. It explores the political underpinnings of the crisis and its links to national-level power dynamics, particularly within the ruling party and the Obasanjo presidency.

INTRODUCTION

After a lengthy period of military-led democratic transition programmes, retired general Olusegun Obasanjo was returned to power as the democratically elected President of Nigeria on 29 May 1999. In assessing the trajectory of Obasanjo's second ascendancy to power, many scholars and commentators pointed to certain economic and social forces that, they

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the African Studies Association UK conference, SOAS, September 2007. I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Insa Nolte for her support and guidance as well as the editor Christopher Clapham for his contribution to merging two earlier drafts of this article. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments, and to Jo Hoffmann, Bolaji Abdullahi and Chief Audu Ogbeh. The usual disclaimers apply.

argued, manufactured his good fortune (Anifowose & Olurode 2004; Williams 1999). They argued that factors such as the death of M. K. O. Abiola, a Yoruba southerner and the presumed winner of the annulled 12 June 1993 presidential elections, combined with increased pressures from southern politicians for a shift of power from the north, as well as the armed revolts in the Niger Delta and other key dynamics, created a deep sense of outrage and agitation that threatened to engulf the country in anarchy if the tyranny of the military continued. Ultimately it had become clear that perpetual military rule had to make way for change, and the dominance of Northern Nigerian elites had to be reframed. Williams (1999: 409–10) argues that 'there was a need for a safe pair of hands that would guarantee the status quo and save the military from wholesale disgrace and humiliation by the embittered and resentful populace', and an Obasanjo presidency met that criterion.

Thus Obasanjo's presidential candidacy as negotiated by former president Babangida's political machine received the blessing of 'the serving and retired military hierarchy' and his electoral victory was executed by a fragile coalition of the retired military old guard, the conservative Northern political elite and an emergent crop of nouveau riche military politicians (*ibid.*: 411). Across the country, similar relations of power and wealth were at play in producing the electoral victories of several politicians in the 1999 state and local contests. This pattern of personalised relationships together with the advantages of incumbency were decisive factors in the re-election of Obasanjo and many sitting governors in the 2003 general elections. Only eleven governors lost their seats, and two of those had switched party. All twenty-two incumbent PDP governors received an automatic ticket for the gubernatorial elections, with the exception of the governor of Anambra, Chinwoke Mbadinuju, who lost the primaries to Dr Chris Ngige, an unknown medical doctor who had been selected by a powerful political entrepreneur in the state to stand in the elections. This article focuses on the personalised relations that resulted in the emergence of Ngige as the PDP gubernatorial candidate and then governor of Anambra, and in the electoral crisis that followed his win. It examines the swift unravelling of Ngige's legitimacy and the subsequent termination of his administration as a case that vividly illustrates the complex relations of power and wealth that constitute the nucleus of political power in Nigeria.

Back in 2002, Ngige's modest political ambitions of becoming a senator for the Anambra central zone were extraordinarily boosted when his path crossed that of Chris Uba, a young wealthy businessman, PDP caucus leader and party financier in the South-East of the country with strong

connections to the Obasanjo presidency.[1] Through the financial backing and manoeuvrings of Uba's political machine, Ngige was selected for the gubernatorial candidacy of the PDP to replace Mbadinuju, who was at odds with his own godfather, Chief Emeka Offor. Uba went on to orchestrate a blanket rigging of the state election to put Ngige in office. Uba gained infamous political stardom as a result of his fall-out with Ngige, but before he became arguably the most well known political godfather in Nigeria, he had within a short space of time garnered prime status within the PDP as an effective political entrepreneur. When asked in a newspaper interview about his relationship with Uba, President Obasanjo described him as the 'young man who helped the PDP to win the last elections in Anambra state' (*The News* 29.11.2004). Uba was equally grandiose in describing his influence by publicly declaring he had achieved the remarkably feat of single-handedly 'enthroning the entire democratic structures in the state' and 'put[ting] in position every politician in the state' (Ibrahim 2003; *ThisDay* 23.12.2004). Uba and Ngige's political relationship and the crisis that ensued in Anambra as a consequence of its breakdown produced the most compelling narrative in modern Nigerian politics of the proliferation of what Nigerians call 'political godfathers', and underscored emergent political patterns challenging the prospects of truly representative democracy in Nigeria. Using the Anambra crisis as a case study, this article seeks to provide an analytically coherent context for the phenomenon of political godfatherism. It explores the political, social and cultural underpinnings that made the Anambra crisis possible, and attempts to link them to state and national-level power dynamics within the ruling party.

This paper first conceptualises godfatherism and contextualises the phenomenon within a broader framework of relevant literature. It then discusses the 2003 PDP Anambra state primaries and the power relations and intra-party struggle that influenced the process. The third section examines the 2003 elections and the strategies used by godfathers to capture the process. The following section presents an analytical narrative of the fall-out between Uba and Ngige and the events and issues surrounding the crisis, together with the related Okija shrine scandal. The final section discusses the Obasanjo presidency's approach to handling the Anambra crisis, and its attempts to frame the consequent political disorder in the state as an intra-party conflict and not a major national scandal.

THEORETICAL APRROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING GODFATHERISM

Over two decades ago, Richard Joseph (1987) argued that clientelism and prebendalism were vital to the analysis of politics and society in Nigeria.

He argued that political actors competing for control over power and scarce resources often manipulate categories such as ethnicity and class to gain advantage over their opponents, and suggested that clientelism was not an alternative framework to understanding Nigerian politics and society, but an embedded characteristic of such identities because both patrons and clients merely utilised 'outward' categories to reinforce their relationships and to mask their materialistic motivation (*ibid.*: 55).

Joseph's work suggests that in Nigeria, prebendalism is socio-culturally rooted in clientelistic relations that link individuals who do not necessarily share the same ethnic, class or regional backgrounds in hierarchical relationships built upon the exchange of political support for personal material gain. Thus the justifying logic of prebendalism is that public office is to be competed for and then exploited for the direct benefit of the office-holders and their reference group (*ibid.*: 8). This means that when electoral politics was introduced in Nigeria, traditional patron–client relationships were able to insert themselves into the framework of legal–rational bureaucracy or 'modern' stateness and adapt to its parameters (Erdmann & Engel 2006: 18). Patrons were able to capture and perpetuate indirect control over scarce 'new' state resources by manipulating the new political system. As a result, personal relations of patronage and clientelistic networks did not overwhelm the impersonal realm of legal rational bureaucracy but sufficiently impacted it to extract private benefit.

In their seminal work in which they revisit the 'analytical utility' of neo-patrimonialism, Erdmann and Engel (*ibid.*: 18) describe the overlap when 'informal politics invades formal institutions', particularly in African societies such as Nigeria, and how this creates an interaction between the private and public spheres. They argue that in looking at the layers of domination in post-colonial Africa, one would observe that 'elements of patrimonial and legal–rational bureaucratic domination penetrate each other' and construct what is referred to as neopatrimonialism; integral to this are the concepts of patronage and clientelism (*ibid.*; see also Ogundiya 2009). For them, whilst patronage serves as a political instrument for the redistribution of collective goods such as roads and schools, clientelism 'implies a dyadic personal relationship between patron and client' (Erdmann & Engel 2006: 21).[2] Therefore political clientelism is concerned with the transactional links a politician has, for example, with a patron/godfather that involve an exchange of support to gain public office in return for the private use of state resources. Erdmann & Engel argue that these transactions are made possible through the 'societal uncertainty created by public institutions' that are often unpredictable (*ibid.*). Patron–client relationships harness the uncertainty that exists in neopatrimonial

societies such as Nigeria and contribute to reproducing the very same 'institutional uncertainty [they are] designed to overcome' (*ibid.*). This ubiquitous political climate of uncertainty created by neopatrimonial rule compels political actors to form hierarchical personalised relationships to mitigate the uncertainty of their political fortunes.

Exploiting disorder

Chabal and Daloz's (1999) paradigm on the political instrumentalisation of disorder expands upon this notion of the utility of uncertainty, and greatly enriches our understanding of complex political realities such as godfatherism in modern Africa. They argue that most African societies are characterised by weak and inefficacious institutions that create acute conditions of disorder which political actors remedy by resorting to 'personal(ised) and vertical solutions' (*ibid.*: xix). Their notion of disorder does not imply absurd and irrational circumstances, but refers to a realm where rational political action exploits or profits from informal political processes. They point out that 'in a world of disorder there is a premium both on the vertical and personalised infra-institutional relations through which the "business" of politics can be conducted and on access to the means of maximizing the returns which the "domestication" of such disorder requires' (*ibid.*). For example, connections to the presidency in Nigeria, which controls the sale of lucrative oil blocs, are channels that are often exploited to provide benefits for the well-established cronyism of oil bloc allocation.

Accordingly the political instrumentalisation of disorder 'refers to the process by which political actors in Africa seek to maximise their returns on the state of confusion, uncertainty and sometimes even chaos, which characterises most African polities' (*ibid.*: xviii). Chabal and Daloz point out that these vertical and personalised relations are more functional than horizontal ones, and as a result 'the business of politics is more usually conducted along [these] informal vertical channels' (*ibid.*: 20). Therefore it is clear that the 'development of political machines and consolidation of clientelistic networks within the formal political apparatus has been immensely advantageous' to patrons seeking political prominence and social status through the control of state resources as well as clients seeking protection and political support (*ibid.*: 14). This leaves no incentive for political elites to change arrangements that are beneficial to expanding their networks and increasing their access to the resources of the state.

Another contribution of Chabal and Daloz's work is their articulation of the notion of reciprocity or what they call the imperative of exchange.

They argue that in African societies most actions, political or otherwise, trigger an expectation of reciprocity, making even the most basic political act such as voting acquire an instrumental connotation (i.e. the potential of eliciting a reward purely because of the prevailing social context, *ibid.*: 158). This aspect of political and socio-economic life is vital to our understanding of how politics works in Nigeria.

Alternative frameworks

This article has not exhausted the catalogue of perspectives that provide tools for interpreting godfatherism in Nigeria. However, I shall limit this analysis to one final concept: the notion of the party machine. As a concept, party machine is closely related and established in American political science literature, notably in Guterbock (1980). Guterbock describes a machine as a specific type of political party, particularly 'one which has a tight, hierarchical organization, includes party agents at the grass roots level, and systematically distributes patronage among its members' (*ibid.*: 3). He argues that the party machine seeks to gain office, like any other regular political party in a competitive election, but is 'primarily organized around the material interests of its members' (*ibid.*: 1). A successful party machine is able to benefit its members in terms of money, jobs and other material incentives, once it has successfully influenced election outcomes. Corrupt foreign and local corporate firms favour party machines, because they too operate on the motivation for profit, and tend to support whichever organisation is able to protect their interests. The work of Guterbock reveals the ability of party machines to attain and maintain political power despite their fundamental contradictions of representation.

These concepts offer interpretations of modern politics in Nigeria that broaden our scope of analysis to accommodate a complex range of political interactions, of which godfatherism is one. Political godfatherism shares the 'fixation on the person [or persons] at the top' that characterises neopatrimonialism and political clientelism (*ibid.*: 13). It also shares a focus on relations of varying dominance that political actors enter into, based on a mutual self-interest in exploiting state resources. It reiterates the logic of prebendalism that political contestation should be engaged in for the purpose of re-appropriating the resources of the state for private interests. And it reverberates the notion of the party machine because the idea that political parties are vehicles for the extraction of state resources is abundantly evident in the Nigerian party system. As a result, godfatherism is itself a multi-layered dynamic that is centred on the actual (personalised) behaviours and relationships of political actors and the

political organisations that are structured around them. Different strands of the arguments discussed help to explain the phenomenon of godfatherism, and the next section will be concerned with defining this concept and explaining its features in modern Nigerian politics.

Godfathers in politics

The military governments of Babangida and Abacha, and the democratic transitions pursued by both administrations, provided perfect conditions for the scale of political entrepreneurship that characterises modern Nigerian politics to flourish. The political parties that featured in these transitions were tailor-made by the military government, and forced upon the Nigerian people with the claim that these parties would be free from the control of powerful political patrons because of their new beginnings. However, this new breed of parties and politicians quickly came under the control of old-style politicians and thus continued the political entrepreneurship that has characterised competitive politics in Nigeria for such a long time (Ihonvbere & Vaughan 1995: 78). Patronage and clientelistic systems nourished by oil money participated in the drawn-out artificial democratic agenda of the military that was ended by the sudden death of General Sani Abacha in 1998. This abrupt end created the hurried circumstances under which many of the political parties that contested the first election in 1999 were organised (Lewis 2003). Many of the candidates who succeeded in winning party nominations were politicians who had garnered the approval and sponsorship of influential figures, who were often 'without any formal status in the political system or in the government' but were rich enough to fund campaigns for key positions and even whole operations of political parties across states and regions (Ellis 2008: 457). Consequently the phenomenon of godfatherism can be defined as a system of influence whereby certain individuals or groups of individuals possess the political, economic or social capacity to decide political party nominations, and to also ensure that these nominees gain political office for the chief purpose of servicing private interests. Godfathers enter personal transactional relationships with candidates in order 'to manipulate politics behind the scene and benefit financially by using their positions to cause contracts to be awarded to favoured companies' (*ibid.*: 458). The influence of political godfathers stems not only from the state resources that they control once public office is privatised, but also from their willingness to deploy corrupt means, foment violence, and manipulate federal, state and local political systems in favour of the candidates they sponsor (Igbafe & Offiong 2007; Rafiu *et al.* 2009). Candidates seek out influential

individuals who have connections to the main centre of power, in this case the presidency in Abuja, and negotiate for the support and protection they need to survive competitive politics in Nigeria.

Explaining godfatherism

The terms 'godfather' and 'godfatherism' have gained widespread currency among Nigerians and their usage has become common in academic literature; an examination of the usage of such familial/paternal metaphors highlights the way in which people perceive and interpret political concepts that shape their everyday life (see Adeoye 2009; Olarinmoye 2008). In presenting themselves as 'fathers', political entrepreneurs project the image of being a protector and provider, which masterfully disguises the exploitative nature of their role. The use of this paternal imagery of benevolence is widespread not only in Nigeria but throughout many African societies. It is not uncommon for African presidents to portray themselves as fathers to their nation, concerned with the welfare and nurturing of the country as a father would his child (Schatzberg 2001). For example, Côte d'Ivoire's former president Felix Houphouet-Boigny was often presented as the papa or 'Old Man' of the country by the media; Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko and Cameroon's Ahmadou Ahidjo, to mention a few, all presented themselves as 'loving, caring, solicitous national fathers' (*ibid.*: 10). In the same way, Nigeria's Obasanjo was often referred to as 'baba' (meaning 'father') by the Nigerian press. Contained within this expression are the expectations of reciprocity that exist in actual father and son relations. The notion is that after a father has invested and supported a child through his life, he should be allowed to eat the fruits of his labour – i.e., he has a right to benefit from the child's success. This means that political elites who assume the role of godfathers do so in the belief that the instruments of state power that are attached to the public office they have helped secure are by extension theirs to enjoy. This partly explains the perception of many godfathers such as Uba, who explains his role as that of an 'investor in people' (*ThisDay* 28.5.2006). The obvious caveat to that statement is that he expected his investment in Ngige's political career to yield him a profit. This thinking reflects Chabal and Daloz's 'imperative of reciprocity' that is part and parcel of the relationship between godfathers and their protégés or candidates, because in each case, once political office is won using the godfather's political machine, the protégé is expected to reciprocate this support under terms decided by the godfather.[3] Former Oyo State governor Victor Olulonye described this relationship in this

way: 'Money flows up and down … these honourable members [of the Oyo State House of Assembly], during the election period, they want the patronage of the puppeteer. Afterwards money will flow in the opposite direction – back from the puppet to the puppeteer' (HRW 2007: 36). As a result, Ngige's refusal to reciprocate the financial backing he received from Uba (i.e. to allow the money to flow in the opposite direction) ruptured his relationship with Uba, and as with many such unstable political relationships, this rupture produced a state of extreme political disorder in Anambra.

ELECTORAL COMPETITION IN ANAMBRA: THE 2003 PDP STATE PRIMARIES

The threat of military resurgence that restrained the investment potential of the 1999 elections was contained when President Obasanjo retired most of the senior officers who had held office under Generals Babangida and Abacha. The retuned political environment was quickly filled by political entrepreneurs keen to stake their claim to relevance and political power. The influence of big money brought in by this mixed group of political actors on each successive stage of the election process did not go unnoticed. Darren Kew (2004) observed that the 2003 elections were so inundated by cash that local banks during party primaries were often emptied of cash by political financiers and party members. Candidates and their backers aggressively pursued party officials, traditional rulers and community associations with bribes and favours in a bid to garner support and gain an advantage over their opponents.

The situation in Anambra was no different. The incumbent governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju and nine other aspirants including a comparatively unknown Chris Ngige hotly contested the PDP state primaries.[4] All twenty-two PDP incumbent governors had been guaranteed the party's ticket for the gubernatorial elections on 19 April 2003, but Mbadinuju's clearance to contest as the PDP candidate was undecided first as a result of a disqualification,[5] and subsequently by the incessant postponement of the primaries (*ThisDay* 4.1.2003). The PDP appeared to be reluctant to confirm Mbadinuju's candidacy, possibly because his popularity in the state had waned as a result of the controversial killing of the chairman of the Anambra State branch of the Nigerian Bar Association, Barnabas Igwe, and his wife.[6] In addition to the battle for the gubernatorial ticket, the disorder surrounding the primaries was exacerbated by a complex power struggle within the PDP hierarchy to determine which candidates would represent the party in the national and state assembly elections.

Looking back at the 1999 elections when Chinwoke Mbadinuju emerged as the state governor, his victory was reportedly masterminded by his godfather Chief Offor (*Daily Champion* 10.2.2006). Offor, a well-known businessman, party financier and close friend of Vice-President Abubakar Atiku, controlled formidable political machinery in the state that included a faction of the PDP called the Anambra People's Forum. In exchange for Offor's backing to win the elections, Mbadinuju is said to have remitted about ₦10 m on a monthly basis to Offor, an arrangement that possibly contributed to Mbadinuju's inability to pay workers' salaries in the state (*The News* 29.11.2004). The relationship broke down, and Offor fielded a new candidate for the elections in the hope of winning back control of the state (*ThisDay* 3.2.2003). Equally vying for control of the state was Chris Uba, who had positioned himself as a PDP leader in the South-East by reportedly bankrolling the opening of Obasanjo's December 2002 re-election campaign in Enugu (*Vanguard* 3.3.2003). Uba also reportedly paid for the campaigns of several politicians aspiring for the State House of Assembly.

The first set of national and state assembly primaries held in December 2002 was marred by violence and malpractice across Anambra. Several incidences were reported that involved electoral materials being snatched, delegates being intimidated and even attacked, and also inconclusive elections in several constituencies. The Ihiala constituency was particularly affected by the violence and a repeat of the elections was called for in Ihiala and fifteen other constituencies (*ThisDay* 30.12.2002). Despite the irregularities, Ngige emerged as the PDP flag-bearer for the Anambra central senatorial seat and Chris Uba's elder brother, Dr Ugochukwu Uba, won the ticket for the Anambra South senatorial seat. The release of the PDP national assembly primaries result that indicated Ngige had won drew a lot of criticism from PDP party members and aspirants, because the results were not released at the locations where the primaries were held in Anambra; instead, the electoral committee had travelled out to the neighbouring state of Enugu to announce the results.[7] In addition, before the delegates from Awka North constituency concluded their vote for aspirants for the Senate and House of Representatives for Anambra Central, a result sheet was leaked at the election venue that was identical to the results released in Enugu the following day.

Chris Uba was accused by members of the PDP of meddling with the party election process and being responsible for the confusion trailing the results because he wanted them to favour his brother and other politicians such as Ngige who had his backing. Joy Emordi, a female politician also contesting a Senate PDP ticket, pointedly criticised Uba for nursing an

ambition to be the next godfather of Anambra politics. She made scathing comments to a newspaper, saying Uba 'wants to determine the political destiny of everyone in the state. He wants you to come and bow (*sic*) bring money' (*ibid.*). In response to the accusations of meddling levied against him, Uba argued that his brother had earned a senatorial seat because he (his brother) had contributed to the PDP and loyally supported Mbadinuju when he served as Commissioner of Agriculture in Mbadinuju's government. Uba's statement that 'politicians should always try and honour agreements made behind closed doors' further alluded to his view of politics (*ThisDay* 10.1.2003).

The Anambra gubernatorial primary was twice postponed before it was finally held on 3 January 2003. Mbadinuju was said to have won 184 of a total of 191 votes cast. Ngige was a distant third with just one vote (*ThisDay* 4.1.2003). The nine other aspirants who lost out protested at Mbadinuju's win and claimed that the delegates who had voted in the elections were mostly ward and local government-level supporters of Mbadinuju and therefore were plainly partial toward him (*Newswatch* 3.2.2003). As an incumbent PDP governor, Mbadinuju was purportedly able to consolidate his control over the party's machinery through an agreement brokered between Obasanjo and the twenty-two other PDP governors that would ensure Obasanjo's re-election and their return for a second term in 2003. The strategy for implementing this agreement is said to have involved a transfer of control over the party machinery in the states from the so-called Abuja politicians to the state governors to allow them to invest heavily in the party structure in preparation for a good showing in the national elections (*Newswatch* 3.2.2003). Mbadinuju reportedly took advantage of this to strengthen his faction of the party, the Anambra Victory Movement (AVM). An additional factor that favoured Mbadinuju was the removal of the local government chairmen at the end of their term in May 2002. This was favourable because the governors were authorised to appoint caretaker committees to handle the administration of the local government areas when the local elections were delayed. Most governors took advantage of this opportunity to strategically place their supporters at the ward and local level. This arrangement ensured that the playing field for the gubernatorial primaries was tilted in Mbadinuju's favour.[8]

However, after numerous closed door caucus meetings Mbadinuju was induced by the PDP hierarchy to step down, and another party election was held on Sunday, 9 February 2003, in which Ngige won 174 of the 241 votes cast to beat six other aspirants. At a ceremony for the PDP governorship candidates attended by party chieftains and supporters of

the candidates, the PDP national chairman Audu Ogbeh acknowledged Mbadinuju in his speech and hinted at the fact that Mbadinuju was persuaded by the party to withdraw from the race: 'The party appreciates the sacrifice which Governor Mbadinuju made in accepting our suggestions. And let me also say that the party will not let him down in the commitment we have entered into' (*ThisDay* 11.2.2003). Many media reports suggested that Mbadinuju was promised an ambassadorial position if he withdrew from the race. However, this promise never materialised, and a month after losing the PDP gubernatorial ticket, Mbadinuju decamped to the Alliance of Democracy (AD) as their gubernatorial candidate for Anambra, sidelining the candidate who had earlier won the ticket (*Newswatch* 6.4.2003).

MAGICAL ELECTIONS

The state and national elections of March/April 2003 succeeded in moving Nigeria past the abrupt terminations that had impeded former civilian-to-civilian political transitions. As notable as this may seem, the results of the elections reflected a deeply flawed process that raised questions about the democratic legitimacy of the leadership that took office. The Nigerian public for the most part were tolerant of the results and seemed resigned to accepting an unchanged government that was beholden to the same elite actors. International and domestic observers and the media on the other hand were scathing in their criticism of the level of electoral malpractice and violence that beset the election period, as well as the seeming passivity of the official electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Irregularities in the process varied widely across the country. The incidence of more blatant malpractices appeared to be localised, and was more rampant in certain states or areas within states (NDI 2003). The Niger Delta and South-East regions in particular were noted for more instances where ballot boxes were stuffed with marked votes, and voters were intimidated and turned away from the polls. Supporters and members of the major political parties, chiefly the PDP, with the assistance of INEC polling officials and the police, openly thumbprinted stacks of ballots that were then dropped into boxes and taken to the Local Government Administration (LGA) headquarters. The PDP had so formidably thwarted the voting process through its co-option of the INEC that in many cases the officials in charge never bothered to actually count the votes. One observer noted that none of the polling stations he visited operated with their final tally sheet but tally sheets with results already

filled out were available at the collation centres before the official close of the polls (Kew 2004: 161). His view was that 'no count was necessary because the PDP had already circumvented the process' (*ibid.*: 161). EU observers also witnessed INEC officials marking ballots for the PDP, and at one particular station, although only 85 names on the list of 743 registered voters were ticked, the ballot box was already full by midday (EUEOM 2003). The elections in Anambra mirrored the problems in the rest of the South-East region, the outcome being so disastrous because of violent clashes between party supporters and the late distribution of voting materials that new elections were called for in five of the eleven House constituencies (Reuters 20.4.2003).

An aspect of the electoral process that was significantly criticised for its contribution to the problem of electoral fraud was the highly vulnerable and complicated collation procedure put in place by the INEC to tally up the votes. The NDI (2003) was uncomplimentary in calling it 'the only system of its kind in the world', and criticised the electoral body for adopting a multi-tiered tabulation process that 'opened up the electoral process to widespread abuse during both the National Assembly and presidential/gubernatorial elections'. In the first stage, votes were counted at the polling stations, and passed on to collation centres that covered ten or twenty units. The results then flowed upward to the LGA level, to constituency centres and then state INEC offices, and finally to the INEC headquarters in Abuja. Each stage was completed over a varied and overlapping length of time, and in several cases results changed considerably as they moved upward. For example, in Anambra the results of one National Assembly race in which a candidate was declared the winner with 14,405 votes were suddenly cancelled and four days later new official results reported an increase in voter turnout by approximately 150%. This boost benefited the previously losing candidate who saw his vote count soar from 13,076 to 67,857, while the original winner's votes mysteriously shrunk to just 5,065.

THE PLOT AGAINST NGIGE

Ngige did not dispute that he had won the governorship of Anambra State in 2003 largely through the formidable political machination of Uba. Indeed during his inauguration ceremony – before their fall-out – Ngige had broken protocol by asking all those present to stand up and acknowledge the arrival of the unelected Uba. Furthermore, in his first speech as state governor, Ngige described the invaluable role Uba had played in his victory by saying: 'this speech will not be complete if I do not

give honour to whom its due … I will like to publicly acknowledge the untiring and relentless efforts of my old and dear friend, Chief Chris Uba in making this day possible' (*ThisDay* 19.7.2003).

Subsequently Nigerians learned that not only had Uba heavily funded Ngige's campaign, but many of those involved in executing the removal plot at the State House of Assembly[9] were politicians whose election Uba had helped to bankroll. The deputy governor, Dr Okey Udeh, who was briefly promoted to governor, was one such politician.

Ngige and Uba had apparently negotiated that Uba would have background control of the state's resources in exchange for financially backing Ngige's campaign. The signed resignation letter that was presented to the assembly and an additional written contract – a declaration of loyalty –had sealed this agreement. Uba, in an interview with Human Rights Watch (2007: 67), claimed that the terms of their agreement stated that Ngige was required to 'exercise and manifest absolute loyalty to the person of Chief Chris Uba as my mentor, benefactor and sponsor', and further stipulated that Uba would have full control of all government contract awards and appointments to Ngige's cabinet. Also, in order to ensure that Ngige would be compelled to adhere to this agreement, a proviso was inserted that authorised Uba to 'avenge himself in the way and manner adjudged by him as fitting and adequate in case of any breach by Ngige that could not be settled through mediation' (*ibid.*: 67). As was widely reported, Ngige breached this agreement by turning down Uba's demands for ₦3bn (about £13 m) for installing him as governor, and also refusing to instruct the accountant general to release an additional ₦860m (about £3.5 m) to Uba for a building contract he had yet to complete (*ThisDay* 11.7.2003). As a result of Ngige's grievous defaults, Uba had felt it was 'fitting' and 'adequate' for him to invoke the resignation letter pre-signed by Ngige and to orchestrate his forceful removal from office.

Beyond the written contract that Uba had entered into with Ngige to enforce his control over the levers of power in Anambra, it was also reported that Ngige and Uba had attended a ritual at the Okija shrine, an important traditional shrine in the Ihiala district of Anambra, and Ngige had sworn an oath of loyalty to Uba. According to the oath, supernatural forces would visit calamitous consequences and possibly physical death upon Ngige if he violated his agreement with Uba. Uba had apparently required members of the State House of Assembly he had bankrolled to swear similar oaths. The revelation of the Okija shrine affair is worth mentioning here because it 'served as a key part of the patronage network' of Uba and it also brings to light the important and informal role

traditional institutions continue to play in modern Nigerian politics (Ellis 2008: 459). The final part of this section discusses the significance of this fiduciary role assigned to traditional beliefs and practices in political dealings.

In his defence, Ngige claimed that he was forced to breach the contract with Uba because his demands for power and control over the state government had become excessive. Ngige alleged that Uba wanted to decide key state appointments such as commissioners, the secretary to the state government, all special advisers, aides and even Ngige's personal staff. Ngige claimed that his insistence that the appointees be highly qualified infuriated Uba, and as a result Uba had vowed 'to teach him a lesson' (*Vanguard* 11.7.2003). In an interview with Human Rights Watch (2007: 67), Ngige alleged that from the moment he took over as governor, Uba inundated him with personal demands for money from the state treasury.

Ngige's confessions after the scandal erupted surprisingly helped him to build a moderately positive image in Anambra State, as the public's perception of him became that of a governor who stood up to the manipulation of his political godfather. Though the elections in the state were roundly criticised as flawed and the governor's victory suspect, Smith (2007: 128) concurs that 'the fact that Ngige reneged on the agreement and was now the apparent target of a larger political machine was enough to make him something of a folk hero'. Ngige capitalised on this popular support, using it in his attempt to break away from Uba and retain his stolen mandate. The public image he presented to the people of Anambra was that of a victim of the corrupt political system: a courageous populist governor who was resisting the efforts of a powerful political godfather determined to take over the state. Ngige further pursued his strategy of renegotiating his status from that of a fraudulent governor to a defender of the public interest by attending to pressing matters in the state, such as paying the long-awaited salary arrears of civil servants and awarding contracts for repairs to the state's notoriously bad roads. These basic acts resonated with many citizens of Anambra, particularly because former governor Mbadinuju had left office hugely unpopular and deeply criticised for the deterioration of state infrastructure and for perpetually defaulting in paying salaries to government workers, presumably because of the hefty financial burden that his relationship with his own godfather had placed upon state finances.

Therefore, as time went on, Ngige's trials at the hands of Uba's well-connected political machine, and the seeming complicity of high-ranking members of the federal government, helped to recast his legitimacy and

garnered him some support from within Anambra and sympathy from the media (*ThisDay* 24.8.2005).

The Okija shrine affair

The majority of Nigerian politicians, like many politicians across Africa, publicly reject traditional religious beliefs and rituals, and instead associate themselves with secular norms or profess belief in either the Christian or Islamic faith. There is however, as demonstrated by the goings-on at Okija, evidence that many political behaviours and relationships are still influenced by local traditional institutions that have retained their cultural credence in spite of so-called modernisation. In a comprehensive study, Ellis (2008) notes how the strategy of leaders of the nationalist movement in the 1930s for making inroads into different communities was to reach out to 'indigenous institutions such as shrines, sodalities and initiation societies' because of their 'important role in the social and political life' of many communities, particularly in Western and Eastern Nigeria. These institutions functioned as unofficial 'nodes of a parallel system of governance whose influence was felt in social and economic matters'. And even though the challenge of Western education, Christianity and Islam has pared down the prominence of traditional shrines and such like, these still endure as sources of identity, authority and legitimacy within many communities. So while political actors such as Uba and Ngige do not openly subscribe to the traditional belief systems represented by shrines such as Okija (both claim to be Christians), they share in this historic tendency of political actors reaching out to such institutions because of their enduring relevance as 'local centres of political influence' within communities (*ibid.*: 460). In short, traditional institutions remain relevant as political instruments for capturing and retaining state power.

The Okija shrine, Ellis observed, 'functioned in a fiduciary capacity, guaranteeing a solemn agreement between two parties. This appeared to be its main role in dealings between politicians' (*ibid.*: 456). As was the practice in the wider community where the shrine was sited, disagreements were brought by various individuals and settled by sworn oaths that were administered by the priests of the shrine, in the expectation that the party that violated the oath would die within a year, thus vindicating the surviving party (Nwabueze 2007: 118; Oba 2008: 153). Presumably, Uba's expectation in making Ngige swear the Okija oath was that the threat of death would further constrain Ngige to honour their agreement. The supernatural powers credited to religious traditional institutions such as

the Okija shrine and their practices thus became one of the tools Uba used to maintain his political influence over Ngige.

Moreover, the fact that Uba (the political godfather) and Ngige (the politician) turned to the Okija shrine and its priests to serve as an arbiter in their disagreement highlights a dynamic of political relations that is difficult to account for and often overlooked in conventional political analysis; that is the role of traditional institutions (or witchcraft) in political processes and their influence on the creation and maintenance of relations of power. It shows how the realms of the political and religious overlap and influence each other. Politicians have historically sought out traditional institutions for legitimacy and used them as custodians of political agreements, with the result that the relationship between politics and religion continues to be fluid and integrated. The informal politics of traditional religious institutions cannot be exhaustively explored in this article, but suffice it to say that the relevance of such older institutions of influence on both 'the notion of power and [to] the practice of modern politics' has to be more fully accounted for in order to appreciate the wider apolitical scope of influences on political decisions and outcomes (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 73).

THE CASE OF TWO ARMED ROBBERS: PRESIDENT OBASANJO AND THE ANAMBRA CRISIS

The Anambra crisis was as much a matter of national-level power dynamics as it was a matter of local politics. As already noted, Chief Uba enjoyed a family relationship to President Obasanjo, and the president's reaction to the crisis reveals a great deal about the attitudes to governance of the Nigerian political elite and its connections to national-level politics. Obasanjo's first directive on receiving the news of Ngige's arrest was to instruct the PDP hierarchy to address the power struggle between Ngige and Uba, and try to reconcile their factions. The president's immediate and sustained response was to frame the crisis as mainly an intra-party affair that was best resolved through negotiations between senior members of the PDP. He did not consider it a constitutional breach that demanded decisive action from the federal government (*The News* 29.11.2004).

However, not every member of the PDP hierarchy shared Obasanjo's approach to the crisis. The PDP national legal adviser and a member of a special Anambra ad hoc committee declared that the governor's arrest was a 'treasonable felony' that was 'no longer a PDP matter' but 'a case of thugs abducting the governor', and would have to be severely dealt with

by the federal government (*ThisDay* 13.11.2003). Outside the PDP, similar views were expressed by many prominent Nigerians and organisations who called for treason charges to be made against those who masterminded the arrest of an elected governor, an act that breached the gubernatorial immunity clause in section 308 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution. Still, despite the growing national outcry and calls for heads to roll, President Obasanjo remained conspicuously on the sidelines of the debate while the PDP made frantic efforts to handle the matter internally. The president did order the compulsory retirement of the assistant inspector general of police, Raphael Ige, who led the team of policemen that arrested Ngige, but public reaction to the order to retire Ige was lukewarm because he was due to formally retire anyway within the same month, after having served the maximum number of years and the president failed to order a criminal investigation within the police force that would uncover the source of Ngige's arrest order (*Vanguard* 18.7.2003). Even with the calls for charges to be made against the principal actors in the crisis, particularly Chris Uba, Obasanjo maintained his softly-softly approach to dealing with the matter and the persons involved – a position that caused considerable agitation across the country and among some members of his own party.

Based on a report from the PDP committee directed to investigate the crisis, the PDP national chairman Chief Audu Ogbeh announced the expulsion from the party of Chris Uba along with the deputy governor Okey Udeh, House speaker Eucharia Azodo, House majority leader Peter Onuorah, and Chuma Nzeribe, representative of Ihiala constituency, for their involvement in the scandal. And in a move that began a public confrontation between the party chairman and the president and resulted in the chairman's forced resignation, Ogbeh declared that the party had only dealt with the political aspect of the crisis, and that the criminal aspect fell within the purview of the executive arm of the government for investigation and prosecution (*Daily Champion* 17.7.2003). Ogbeh's position countered the president's advocacy of a political solution to what he perceived as purely a political problem in Anambra.

In the wake of his announced dismissal from the PDP, Uba broke his silence in a three-page statement to a newspaper rebuking Ngige for betraying his trust and bailing out of their 'gentleman's agreement' (*ThisDay* 21.7.2003); and in an interview with another newspaper, Uba contested his expulsion from the PDP and accused the party of betraying his loyalty. He lamented: 'I worked for the PDP in Anambra state. I helped the party win the state. I spent money and made sure the party succeeded in Anambra state. I delivered the state to the party but you can see their decision on the matter is unfair … I operated one purse. I have an

accountant who gives them [the PDP candidates] the money to run for their election. So, I cannot say the money is one naira or two naira. But you know about elections in Nigeria. It is very expensive' (*Daily Champion* 25.7.2003).

Further assertions by Uba that he had not only sponsored Ngige's campaign, but also those of the deputy governor, the three PDP state candidates who made it to the Senate, ten members of the House of Representatives and thirty members of the House of Assembly revealed how it was possible for Ngige's removal and replacement to be stitched up so seamlessly, and the extent of Uba's political clout within the state government (*ThisDay* 14.7.2003). Quite troubling for the president and the PDP were the implications of Uba's confessions for the public's perception of the party's overwhelming victory in the state, particularly as the Anambra Electoral Petition Tribunal was dealing with more petitions concerning the conduct of the Anambra elections than for any other state in the country (*Vanguard* 3.6.2003). The unease of the PDP was based on the likelihood that any further revelations from Uba could potentially unravel the fragile democratic legitimacy of the party's electoral victory in the state, the South-East zone and possibly across the country. Therefore, in the days following Uba's grandstanding to the press and a lawsuit filed by Uba to stop any attempt to arrest or try him for treason, the PDP began to ease their demands for legal action by the government against Uba's faction by hinting that Uba's expulsion from the party could be reversed if he apologised for his actions (*Vanguard* 4.9.2003).

In yet another attempt by President Obasanjo to resolve the Anambra crisis through the PDP leadership, a reconciliation committee led by the then Senate president Adolphus Wabara and former Imo state governor Chika Udenwa was set up in Owerri to settle the feud, which had begun to threaten the cohesion of the party in the South-East zone. This effort to resolve the crisis internally as a so-called family affair within the PDP resulted in the Owerri accord, which basically acknowledged and granted Uba influence over a certain number of Ngige's political appointments: 'a quasi-official recognition' that Chris Uba was an entitled political benefactor of Ngige (Smith 2007: 129).

In spite of all these efforts, reconciliation between Uba and Ngige and their supporters was short-lived, and tensions in the state steadily escalated into widespread violence in November 2004. Thugs reported to be supporters of Uba attacked and looted major government buildings and commercial centres, causing millions of naira in damage. As the mob carried out their attacks, the police were seen standing by, making no attempts to quell the violence or arrest those involved. Once again the police appeared

culpable in the political war declared by Uba on Ngige. The onslaught of violence in Anambra was widely speculated to have been sponsored by Uba, in order to create a state of extreme disorder in Anambra that would overwhelm Ngige's administration and justify the president in terminating his governorship by declaring a state of emergency, akin to the president's handling of the communal violence that rocked Plateau State. PDP chairman Ogbeh asserted in an interview (Ogbeh 2005 int.) that the escalation of the situation in Anambra and an apparent attempt on Ngige's life led to his public letter to Obasanjo, published in a daily newspaper (*The Punch* 11.12.2004), which openly criticised Obasanjo's failure to effectively contain the Anambra crisis. Ogbeh wrote: 'I am deeply troubled and I can tell you that an overwhelming percentage of our party members feel the same way though many may never be able to say this to you for a variety of reasons… On behalf of the People's Democratic Party I call on you to act now and bring any and all criminal, even treasonable, activity to a halt. You and you alone have the means. Do not hesitate. We do not have too much time to waste.'

Obasanjo's lengthy and very personal reply to Ogbeh was also published in a daily newspaper, and contained strong language that revealed his deep disappointment at what he had perceived as Ogbeh's betrayal (*The Guardian* 13.12.2004). The deeply personal tone of the letter revealed his own familial interpretation of the events in Anambra,[10] and highlights two key issues worth exploring here: first, his impression of Ngige's troubled relationship with his real father, and second, his description of Uba and Ngige's political relationship. Just as Ogbeh indicts Obasanjo for failing to address the crisis in Anambra, so Obasanjo indicts Ngige for the breakdown of his relationship with his father. In describing his first contact with Ngige, it is telling that the president felt it necessary to recount his reaction to the news that Ngige was estranged from his father and the rest of his family. Obasanjo shared his view that such a situation was something of a cultural abomination and that he had advised Ngige to reconcile with his father. The weight given to a family dispute in Obasanjo's impression of Ngige's character – that he seems to suggest might be mirrored in his political dealings – indicates the ingress of familial and kinship metaphors into Nigerian political life. Expectations about personal relationships between kin are transferred to the realm of modern political competition, as political actors create and maintain political associations through 'principles of mutual aid, of patron–client reciprocity, based on the model of kin and family relations' (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 27). As discussed earlier, political relationships are often imbued with familial qualities of reciprocity, respect and loyalty. Obasanjo's condemnation of

Ngige's behaviour towards his father suggests the possibility that the president was unsurprised and equally disapproving of Ngige's conduct towards his political godfather. And his conclusion that the Anambra crisis was 'essentially a human organisational and human relationship issue' that was best resolved 'as a family affair' also shows that the president viewed the attempt to remove Ngige and the resultant violence in Anambra as outcomes that could have been avoided and could now be dealt with by reconciling Ngige to his political godfather, Chris Uba (*The Guardian* 13.12.2004).

Obasanjo first mentions Uba by name in his letter when he recounts a report brought to him by Uba, revealing trouble with Ngige. Obasanjo never explains the nature of the relationship between Uba and Ngige, or the reasons why Uba's concern would be so important that he would appoint an 'elder of the state' to settle their discord. He however admits to the private meeting he had with Uba and Ngige, when Uba reminded Ngige that his victory was won for him not by him. Obasanjo writes about his shock at this revelation, but exposes his disingenuity by failing to pass this damning confession to the Anambra state elections tribunal, or as head of state initiating a federal investigation. Obasanjo's recollection of his meeting with Uba and Ngige becomes even more alarming when he apparently counselled Uba and Ngige by comparing their conflict to a case where two armed robbers rob a house, and one of the robbers decides to keep the loot to himself refusing to share it with his accomplice. Obasanjo's primary concern in this unflattering analogy is the conduct of the greedy robber – obviously Ngige – whom he condemns for not recognising that there should be 'justice, fairness and equity' even among robbers. That the president would characterise Uba and Ngige's political dealings as a conspiracy to loot a house, and indict the selfish robber who refused to share the loot, is further evidence of the general acceptance of a pattern for political associations in Nigeria that is built on the exploitation of public office for private gain. From Obasanjo's perspective, Uba's expectation that his support of Ngige's candidacy would result in his access to state resources was clearly reasonable and should have been honoured by Ngige. This judgement coming from the president explains his attempts to frame the Anambra crisis as an intra-party affair, and his softly-softly approach to Uba and Ngige's fractured relationship.

The treatment of the crisis by Obasanjo underscores the pervasive nature of godfather politics throughout Nigeria's political hierarchy. The president's characterisation of Uba in his letter, as well as his many reconciliatory efforts, were evidence of Uba's status as a prominent political player in the Anambra saga. It also exposed how Uba's influence

transcended the internal politics of Anambra, and why the state or national PDP hierarchy could not check his actions. The party's effort to hold Uba accountable, though not completely consistent, received little backing from the president or the executive arm of government. Therefore they failed to stem the spiralling political scandal that had engulfed Anambra.

❀ ❀ ❀

The Anambra crisis exposed two realities of modern Nigerian politics. First, it illustrates the limitations of the ruling party, the PDP, against the power consolidated in the executive branch – the presidency – and that this power is largely unchecked and substantially unbalanced by the legislature and the judiciary. The Obasanjo presidency continued the authoritarian pattern favoured by military dictators whereby the head of state operated above the law. Since Obasanjo appointed himself as minister in charge of the ministries of both power and petroleum, he was able to control significant portions of state finance with little accountability, thus bulking up the 'Office of President' as a parallel government. Moreover, due to this expanded role of the presidency, clientelistic benefits such as lucrative oil contracts and electrification projects were often allocated at the discretion of the president's office and not by the officials or ministries directly in charge of these sectors of government. Thus, Uba's connection to the presidency in Abuja provided him with crucial political capital in state and local politics. Second, the crisis exposed the highly presidential nature of modern Nigerian politics and showed 'that power is intensely personalised around the figure of the president. Not only is the political elite typically an exceptionally narrow one, it is almost entirely based in the capital city' (van de Walle 2003: 310). As the Anambra crisis has shown, connections to Abuja were crucial to Uba's ability to build a support base in the state and maintain his influence on events, regardless of the extreme political disorder this caused within the state and the region. The eight years of the Obasanjo presidency demonstrated the potent concentration of power and resources at the apex of federal government, and how the powers of the presidency can be used to subvert and control democratic institutions and processes. The near-unmitigated supremacy of the Obasanjo presidency and its allies in the Anambra crisis further articulated the position of the ruling party in relation to the presidency, and showed how powerful members of the party and Obasanjo loyalists were able exploit their connections and maintain their positions of patronage, even when unfavourable conditions resulted in Anambra.

This article has discussed the political crisis of Anambra and attempted to demonstrate how a practical approach that focuses on the behaviour of political actors and their personalised relations of power provides a richer framework for understanding African political culture. It has also argued that political godfatherism is a consequence both of the personalised nature of Nigerian politics and of the structure and internal dynamics of the Nigerian party system. Though the case of Anambra provides an extreme example of the godfatherism, corruption and violence that characterise modern Nigerian politics, the actions of the judiciary provide reasons for calm optimism. In March 2006, a court ruling that Ngige's 2003 electoral win was fraudulent and therefore null and void ended the Uba–Ngige saga. Peter Obi, his electoral opponent from the opposition All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), was declared the winner of the elections and sworn in to replace Ngige. Unfortunately Obi's tenure as governor also suffered its share of setbacks, and in the 2007 gubernatorial polls Andy Uba, the PDP candidate (former special adviser to Obasanjo and brother of Chris Uba), was declared the winner of an openly fraudulent election. Though the Nigerian Supreme Court reinstated Obi by declaring Uba's election null and void, the political intrigues in Anambra State remain daily headline news.

This article has looked at the vertical personalised relationships that influenced the politics of the 2003 Anambra elections and their aftermath in an attempt to shed light on the wider phenomenon of godfatherism and to energise this discourse. It has argued that vertical personalised relationships such as those that linked former president Obasanjo to PDP patron Chris Uba and then to Anambra governor Ngige prove to be more profitable and functional than horizontal relationships in offering patrons a channel through which they can attain prominence and social status, and clients can receive protection and political support.

The article has also argued that the PDP demonstrates how the political party system in Nigeria is heavily dependent on the influence of wealthy and powerful figures to fund the operations of parties and their candidates in exchange for access to the resources attached to political office. Thus political parties are transactional platforms where party financiers and their clients exchange political support for the private use of state resources. Democratic processes in Nigeria have so far functioned in this chaotic, informal and unpoliced environment that suggests that relations of patronage are necessary to alleviating uncertain outcomes.

Finally, the INEC has demonstrated its vulnerability to manipulation and co-option by political godfathers intent on capturing the electoral process. The commission's argument that it has suffered from a lack of

adequate funding is highly suspect because, although its budgetary allocations are often less than adequate, it attracts hefty amounts of financial aid from the international community, such as the donation of over ₦3bn made by a group of international organisations towards the 2007 elections.[11] Large donations like this reflect the optimism of the international community, and its faith in the power of elections to sufficiently crack open Nigeria's democratic space, though the 2007 elections were to prove no less traumatic than earlier ones.

NOTES

1. Uba also had personal ties to President Obasanjo through his brother Andy Uba, who served as Obasanjo's special adviser on domestic affairs and was married to the president's wife's sister; this arguably added to level of access and protection that Uba enjoyed under the Obasanjo presidency.

2. Although groups can be considered clients, they are not the relevant collective in this instance.

3. In several interviews with a prominent godfather based in the North-East, he repeatedly referred to the politicians he had sponsored as 'my candidates'. Some members of the media refer to politicians with known godfathers as 'protégés'.

4. Chris Ngige's initial political ambition was to become the PDP flag-bearer for the Anambra central senatorial seat but it appears he was persuaded to stretch that ambition and aim for the governorship of the state. He had even been announced the winner of the controversial national assembly primaries by the PDP state electoral committee in an election that the head of the committee had condemned as rigged. Ngige's dual campaign for the senatorial and gubernatorial ticket was a major source of the uncertainty and confusion that plagued the primaries. What is certain is that Ngige opted out of the senatorial race at the last minute for the gubernatorial race. See 'Protests trail PDP national assembly', *ThisDay* 10.1.2003, and 'Irregularities mar Anambra PDP primaries', *Vanguard* 30.12.2002.

5. In December 2002, the primary election panel led by General Salihu Ibrahim (rtd) had disqualified Mbadinuju from participating in the primaries. The panel claimed petitions from market women, civil servants and the clergy of Anambra protesting a second term for Mbadinuju had informed their decision. However, a week after this announcement, the panel overturned this decision and cleared Mbadinuju to contest the state gubernatorial primaries. See 'Primaries: PDP clears Mbadinuju, Nyame', *ThisDay* 30.12.2002.

6. The Igwes had been murdered in Onitsha by the Bakassi Boys, a vigilante group that had been adopted and was officially affiliated with the state government as the Anambra Vigilante Service (AVS). Human Rights Watch (2002: 3) maintains that Mbadinuju was credibly linked to the murders of Igwe and his wife over Igwe's public criticism of Mbadinuju, openly calling for his resignation over his failure to pay the salaries of government workers in the state for several months.

7. PDP members and aspirants expected the results to be announced at the various election venues so they faulted the committee's decision to transport the results to Enugu, because the likelihood that the results could be manipulated was increased. In addition, there has been a noticeable trend throughout the Anambra electoral crisis and its aftermath where important party meetings and negotiations etc. that affect Anambra directly are relocated to its neighbouring state, Enugu. Several political observers have commented that this was because Uba's country home is in Enugu and he draws upon an extensive support base in the state.

8. After the result of the primaries had been cancelled, a PDP gubernatorial aspirant, Benson Nnoruka, complained to a newspaper saying that no matter how many times the primary was repeated Mbadinuju would win. He argued that 'if people are handpicked, you can tell whom they will vote for'. See 'Why not Mbadinuju?', *Newswatch* 3 February 2003.

9. After Ngige's arrest in July 2003, the then speaker, Mrs Eucharia Azodo (a former personal assistant and close relative to Uba), presented a letter to the State House of Assembly purportedly signed by Ngige informing the House members that he had decided to resign from office for personal reasons. On the basis of this letter, the House unanimously resolved to adopt a motion to swear in the

deputy governor, Dr Okey Udey as governor to fill the vacuum in government created by Ngige's exit. Udeh's hasty promotion to governor was soon terminated by an intervention from Vice-President Atiku Abubakar. According to newspaper reports, Ngige was able to place a desperate call from the hotel where he was being held to the vice-president, who then contacted the inspector general of police and ordered that Ngige be released.

10. Smith (2007) presents a thorough discussion of both letters in his book, which will not be revised here.

11. The donation represented 10% of the overall budget spent on the 2007 elections.

REFERENCES

Adeoye, O. A. 2009. 'Godfatherism and the future of Nigerian democracy', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, 6: 268–72.

Anifowose, R. & Olurode, L., eds. 2004. *Issues in Nigeria's 1999 General Election*. Ikeja, Nigeria: John West Publications.

Chabal, P. & J. P. Daloz. 1999. *Africa Works: disorder as political instrument*. Oxford: James Currey.

Ellis, S. 2008. 'The Okija shrine: death and life in Nigerian politics', *Journal of African History* 49: 445–66.

Erdmann G. & Engel U. 2006. 'Neopatrimonialism revisited: beyond a catch-all concept', working paper no. 16, Hamburg: German Institute of Global Area Studies.

European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM). 2003. *Nigeria: National Assembly Elections, 12 April 2003; Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections, 19 April 2003; State Houses of Assembly Elections, 3 May 2003: final report*. Abuja: EUEOM.

Guterbock, T. M. 1980. *Machine Politics in Transition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2002. 'Nigeria: The Bakassi Boys: the legitimization of murder and torture', available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,HRW,,NGA,3cea124a4,0.html

HRW. 2007. 'Criminal politics: violence, "godfathers" and corruption in Nigeria', Human Rights Watch Report 19, 16(A).

Ibrahim, J. 2003. 'The rise of Nigeria's godfathers', *BBC Focus on Africa Magazine*, available at: http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/...

Igbafe, A. A. & O. J. Offiong. 2007. 'Political assassinations in Nigeria: an exploratory study 1986–2005', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 1, 1: 9–19.

Ihonvbere J. & Vaughan O. 1995. 'Nigeria: democracy and civil society', in J. A. Wiseman, ed. *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Routledge, 71–91.

Joseph, R. A. 1987. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.

Kew, D. 2004. 'The 2003 elections: hardly credible, but acceptable', in R. I. Rotberg, ed. *Crafting the New Nigeria: confronting the challenges*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 139–73.

Lewis, P. M. 2003. 'Nigeria: elections in a fragile regime', *Journal of Democracy* 14, 3: 131–44.

National Democratic Institute (NDI). 2003. 'Statement of the National Democratic Institute international election observer delegation to Nigeria's April 19 presidential and gubernatorial Elections', NDI, available at: http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200304230768.html, posted 23.4.2003.

Nwabueze, R. N. 2007. 'Dead bodies in Nigerian jurisprudence', *Journal of African Law* 51, 1: 117–50.

Oba, A. A. 2008. 'Juju oaths in customary law arbitration and their legal validity in Nigerian courts', *Journal of African Law* 52, 1: 139–58.

Ogundiya, I. S. 2009. 'Political corruption in Nigeria: theoretical perspectives and some explanations', *Anthropologist* 11, 4: 281–92.

Olarinmoye, O. O. 2008. 'Godfathers, political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 2, 4: 66–73.

Rafiu, O. O., A. Owolabi & S. N. Folasayo. 2009. 'The Nigerian state, political assassination and democratic consolidation: a historical exploration', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 3, 2: 156–64.

Schatzberg, M. G. 2001. *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: father, family, food*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Smith, D. J. 2007. *A Culture of Corruption: everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

van de Walle, N. 2003. 'Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42, 2: 297–321.
Williams, A. 1999. 'Briefing: Nigeria: a restoration drama', *African Affairs* 98, 392: 407–13.

Newspapers and agencies (published in Lagos except as noted)

Daily Champion; *Newswatch*; Reuters (London); *TheGuardian; The News; The Punch; ThisDay; Vanguard.*

Interviews

Ogbeh Audu, former PDP national chairman, Abuja, 9.9.2005